

**Amendments to the Claims:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings of claims in the application:

1.     **(Currently Amended)** A convertible rongeur comprising  
a front handle piece pivotably attached to a pivot point in a bottom shaft piece having a [tip]  
shaft portion and a handle portion,  
engagement means whereby said front handle piece is engaged with a top shaft cutting piece  
so as to slideably advance [and retract] said top shaft cutting piece relative to the [tip]  
shaft portion of said bottom shaft piece when said front handle piece is compressed  
relative to said handle portion of said bottom shaft piece,  
spring means to resist said compression and hold said front handle piece apart from said  
handle portion of said bottom shaft piece,  
wherein release means permits said top shaft cutting piece to open from the front, to allow  
access for cleaning,  
and wherein said top shaft cutting piece, when so opened, remains attached by attachment  
means to the [body] remainder of the rongeur, so as to retain all parts of said rongeur in  
one attached unit at all times.
2.     **(Currently Amended)** [A] The rongeur as in claim 1, wherein said engagement means  
comprises a driving slot in the top end of said front handle piece that engages a driving pin in  
said top shaft cutting piece.
3.     **(Previously Amended)** [A] The rongeur as in claim 2, wherein said release means  
comprises a retractable mounting for said front handle piece, which when biased so as to retract  
said front handle piece, permits said driving pin to unseat from said driving slot and slide over  
said top end of said front handle piece.
4.     **(Previously Amended)** [A] The rongeur as in claim 3, wherein said front handle can  
also be retracted so that said driving pin may slide back over said top end of said front handle  
piece so as to reseat in said driving slot.

5. **(Currently Amended)** [A] The rongeur as in claim 1, wherein said attachment means comprises a metal link pivotally attached at one end thereof to the rear portion of said top shaft cutting piece ["and a central point on the top side" to] and at the other end thereof to a central point between the shaft and handle portions of said bottom shaft piece.
6. **(Previously Amended)** [A] The rongeur as in claims 3 or 4, wherein said driving slot is positioned so as to slant rearward at the top at an angle of approximately 14 degrees from the vertical, and wherein said front handle piece comprises a radius and a ramp to the rear of said slot so as to facilitate the sliding of said driving pin over said top end of said front handle piece.
7. **(Previously Amended)** [A] The rongeur as in claim 3, wherein said spring means comprise two elongated spring pieces each having a top and bottom end, the bottom ends of which are attached, respectively, to said front handle piece and said handle portion of said bottom shaft piece, and the top ends of which are rotatably or hingably joined together in a manner such that said springs do not readily detach from each other when said front handle piece is loosened or retracted.
8. **(Currently Amended)** A convertible rongeur comprising  
a front handle piece;  
a bottom shaft piece moveably attached to said front handle piece, said bottom shaft piece having a shaft portion and a handle portion and a longitudinal axis along said shaft portion, said front handle piece being compressed toward said handle portion of said bottom shaft piece to operate said rongeur; and  
a top shaft cutting piece slideably engaged along said longitudinal axis, with said shaft portion of said bottom shaft piece, wherein said top shaft cutting piece is disengageable from said bottom shaft piece such that the top shaft cutting piece no longer touches said bottom shaft piece but remains linked to the remainder of said rongeur.